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TV REVIEW

# CBS' 'Jack' an Irreverent Living Photo Album of J.F.K.

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The catchy one-word title, the initially treacly piano music, the wash of always charming family home movies—Peter and Nick Davis' film on John F. Kennedy's life and presidency, "Jack" (at 9 tonight on CBS, Channels 2 and 8), appears to be yet another TV love letter to the fallen young leader.

But Peter Davis (Nick's father) is too gifted a filmmaker to send just another valentine aloft during what might be called J.F.K. sweeps week. Davis pere made the most bitterly observant Vietnam film of all, "Hearts and Minds," and with "Jack," he has lent his distinct touch to a deeply impressionistic and impressively cinematic portrait.

Eschewing talking heads, off-screen narration and all the other trappings of standard historical documentaries, the Davises, with editor Tom Haneke, have assembled a kind of living photo album over which audio reflections of J.F.K. come in and go out like the wanderings of a mind. At the same time, "Jack" is rigorously structured to follow chronological events, including some you've probably never seen before.

The film is filled with such an awareness of TV literacy and how we've attached certain images to J.F.K. that it's startling to see a steady dose of utterly unfamiliar imagery. The Sept. 26, 1960, debate between Kennedy and Richard Nixon, for instance, has always been depicted as two candidates talking behind podiums. Here, we see future "60 Minutes" producer Don Hewitt setting up the cameras, the candidates fidgeting before airtime, and Nixon joking that he needs a shave.

Laced through the two-hour work is an ironic and irreverent sense of Kennedy's superstardom, as well as how images made the man.